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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 26, 2024

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) led a delegation of its members to Washington, DC to participate in a Reception/Forum with the United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC), Executive Leadership Council (ELC), and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), on September 13th, 2024

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"The AACCNJ was pleased to lead an invitation-only delegation to join me at a "Member Showcase" event in Washington, D.C., said John E. Harmon, Sr., Founder, President & CEO. "US Chamber President, Susan Clarke and I collaborated with the members of her senior staff for some time on this joint event on behalf of AACCNJ members, this was a significant event for our members," said Harmon.

Harmon stressed the need for stronger engagement from government and business leaders to support African American businesses, emphasizing that an agenda focused on economic growth and addressing challenges faced by minority businesses can drive positive change in the economy and supply chains. "These businesses hit the ground running every day to provide value."

Event Details:

The reception/forum was held on Friday, September 13 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm in The Great Hall. The event included a mainstage conversation, and tabletop exhibits highlighting 20-25 Black-owned businesses from New Jersey.

The audience was composed of approximately 400 persons to include CBC Leaders, African American C-Suite Executives, Heads of Government Affairs Offices, Chief Diversity Officers, Vice Presidents of Procurement, Trade Association Executives, and other stakeholders.

The theme for the event was "*Free Enterprise: Renewing Growth and Expanding Opportunity*." The goal is to amplify the importance of free enterprise in expanding growth and economic opportunity and highlight the importance of America's Black-owned business, and celebrate the successes of member companies.

AACCNJ members were selected to participate in this opportunity to showcase their business; it also afforded the AACCNJ a platform to present the diverse industry representation and the capacity of its members to those in attendance.

Please read this update from the US Chamber of Commerce:

https://www.uschamber.com/improving-government/our-goal-is-to-create-economic-opportunity-with-full-economic-participation

Please visit this link to view the photo gallery:

https://uschamber.photoshelter.com/galleries/C0000ahSAz9VT34s/G00004LSwWxO1RP0/USCC1011916

Testimonials from AACCNJ Members:

"When John E. Harmon Sr., IOM invites you to be part of something, there is only one right answer. His leadership guided the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) to shine at the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. The panel discussion, networking, and energy were truly inspiring. Witnessing numerous black entrepreneurs driving transformative growth was spectacular. And let us not forget the thrill of having your own billboard - pretty dope too!

Derek Peterson - Soter Technologies

"The AACCNJ's President's Club showcase was a terrific opportunity, and well-crafted by Dr. John Harmon our Founder CEO and President, while being orchestrated by Mary Griffin! The message that remains consistent throughout our entrepreneurial ventures as business owners, is that relationships will drive you down the path to success. Engagement with Delta Airlines, UPS and Ramsey Gordon & Associates were just a few of the connections we were able to cultivate by attending the event. Placing Minority business leaders of NJ in the room with the CBC and corporate leaders was an enormous success and we hope to see this as an annual event!"

Bydeia Harmon representing Brandon Young - DavisEIS

"East West Connection was honored to participate in the President's Club Showcase at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. My sincere thanks and appreciation to John Harmon and the staff of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Executive Leadership Council for sponsoring this innovative forum for Black business owners to showcase their companies to key decision makers from around the country. It was reaffirming and encouraging to hear comments about renewing growth and expanding opportunities from those at the forefront of changing policies in government and the private sector. John, please know I value all you do behind the scenes to champion EWC and other Black businesses."

Ralph D. Weaver - East West Connection, Inc.

“The opportunity to showcase Bridge Builders Newark - Affordable Housing Initiative at the “President’s Club Showcase” event in Washington, D.C. was an incredible experience. I connected with fellow developers, staffing agencies, MEP firms, and affordable housing lobbyists who are actively creating opportunities for residents to live in safe, healthy, and affordable homes in thriving communities. I can only describe the atmosphere as "Pure Magic". The energy, influence, and co-creation present will absolutely shape decisions, actions, and outcomes for years to come. “

- Gerald Whitaker - Bridge Builders Newark

“I cannot thank the Chamber enough for the invitation to the showcase. As always, the AACCNJ goes above and beyond in putting its members in positions to succeed.

The showcase itself was an excellent opportunity to network with industry and civic leaders. I was glad to have great conversations with attendees who stopped by, and I am encouraged by the possibilities emanating from the connections I made there.”

Thank you,

Muyiwa Fagbami - Broadview Technologies

Background:

In January 2024, the CBC sent a “Corporate Accountability Letter” to Fortune 500 companies asking them to reaffirm their commitments to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and share updates on their 2020 commitments; provide a progress report on the promises made; and advise on ways companies and the CBC can collaborate legislatively to close the racial wealth gap. In addition, the CBC proposed to continue its evaluation of Corporate America through an equity scorecard and hearings to assess progress. To provide member value, the U.S. Chamber met with CBC Chairman Steven Horsford and others, convened member companies to help address their concerns, and composed a survey to capture how they would respond. CBC Chairman Steven Horsford will soon release the survey findings, which are expected to be positive. The CBC Foundation’s 53rd Annual Legislative Conference (ALC), sponsored by Amazon, will take place September 11-15, 2024, in Washington, D.C. The ALC is a unique platform where thought leaders, legislators, influencers, and concerned citizens converge to discuss and address critical issues, forge partnerships, and promote the political, economic, and social advancement of Black communities. Last year’s conference attracted 12,000 participants.

Partners:

U.S. Chamber of Commerce (USCC)

The U.S. Chamber is the world’s largest business organization. Its members range from the large businesses and chambers of commerce across the country that support communities, to the leading industry associations and global

corporations that innovate and solve for the world's challenges, to the emerging and fast-growing industries that are shaping the future. The Chamber is an ally and champion for businesses on Capitol Hill, in the courts, in the state houses, and in the markets around the world.

Executive Leadership Council (ELC)

The Executive Leadership Council (https://www.elcinfo.com/about/) is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1986 that opens channels of opportunity for the development of Black executives to positively impact business and communities. Under the leadership of President & CEO Mike Hyter, ELC's CEO Advisory Council includes Rosalind Brewer; Thasunda Brown-Duckett, President & CEO of TIAA; Frank Clyburn, CEO and Board Director of International Flavors & Fragrances; Marvin Ellison, Chairman, President and CEO of Lowe's Companies, Inc.; *and* David Rawlinson II, President & CEO of Qurate Retail, Inc. To be eligible for membership in the preeminent membership organization, candidates must qualify as one of the following: 1) Senior-level black executive, defined as CEO, C-suite executives, and those reporting to C-suite executives (i.e., within two positions of the enterprise-wide CEO) at a Fortune 1000/Global 500 corporation or company with equivalent annual revenues; 2) Senior-level black executive, as defined above, at a professional services firm equivalent to a Fortune 1000/Global 500 corporation; 3) Black executives serving on the Board of Directors of a Fortune 1000/Global 500 corporation or equivalent; or 4) Black entrepreneur of a top-tier company with minimum annual revenue of $200 million.

African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ)

The *African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) is* dedicated to economically empowering and sustaining African American communities and businesses through entrepreneurship and capitalistic initiatives throughout the state of New Jersey and through its partnership with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. AACCNJ joins the top 3% of all chambers in the U.S. that are accredited, is the only accredited chamber in New Jersey, and is the only accredited African American chamber in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Federation.

The AACCNJ performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders, to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.